

Priming the Pipeline: Promoting Equity in the Professional Trades



Latino Affairs
Commission

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The Ohio Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs (“OCHLA”) put forth best efforts in gathering and providing accurate and current information. This report contains data from the latest research available. Upon request, OCHLA will provide any additional information or data available.

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I. Introduction

The skilled trades profession is facing a substantial workforce shortage as Baby Boomers retire with studies estimating that 31 million skilled trades positions will be left vacant by the year 2020¹. Positions that will be most challenging for firms to fill include electricians, machinists, welders, plumbers, pipefitters, industrial machinery mechanics and civil/electrical/mechanical engineers². The recruitment of professionals who are sufficiently trained to fill the gaps in skilled trades is critical to the sustainability of these professions and our economy.

Governor Kasich, through his Office of Workforce Transformation, has prioritized aligning Ohio's education with jobs in professional trades by supporting collaborations and policies that positively impact the trades workforce³. The Ohio Latino Affairs Commission strives to align its priorities with the Governor's strategic direction and has focused its workforce development efforts on creating skilled trade opportunities for Ohio's Latino workers.

Latinos and other racial/ethnic minority workers are vastly underrepresented in professional occupations⁴ and unions⁵, and are an excellent target for industry recruiters. Hispanic contributions to the United States labor force have more than doubled since the 1990s and Hispanic workers currently account for 17 percent of national employment. Despite their high rates of participation in the construction industry, they are considerably overrepresented in labor-intensive sectors⁶ and less likely than any other group to be employed in a managerial role or professional occupation⁷. This underrepresentation in professional trades is reflected in the weekly earnings of Hispanic workers, which were 28 percent lower on average than those of white workers in 2016⁸.

One cause for this discrepancy is the low rate of participation by Hispanics in registered apprenticeship programs designed to prepare workers for a career in the professional trades. Barriers such as a lack of exposure to the industry, transportation and financial insecurity, and insufficient language resources often keep Hispanic workers from entering or succeeding in apprenticeship programs. Despite these barriers, there is ample evidence that members of the Latino community would be excellent candidates for a career in this industry.

¹ [Skilled trades are in demand as boomers retire](#). Adecco USA. 2018.

² Ibid. [Skilled trades are in demand as boomers retire](#).

³ FY 2018 Annual Report. Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation. 2018.

⁴ [Educational attainment and occupation groups by race and ethnicity in 2014](#). *The Economics Daily*. 2015.

⁵ [Latino Workers and Unions](#). *Labor Council for Latin American Advancement*. 2015.

⁶ [Labor force characteristics by race and ethnicity, 2016](#). U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2017.

⁷ Ibid. [Educational attainment and occupation groups by race and ethnicity in 2014](#).

⁸ Ibid. [Labor force characteristics by race and ethnicity, 2016](#).

In this edition of the Latino Community Report, we investigate barriers and opportunities related to the professional trades for Latinos in Ohio. We examine average wages, union membership, and success in apprenticeship programs, as well as potential causes for discrepancies between Latinos and their peers in these areas. We consider opportunities for Latino recruitment in the professional trades and emphasize the importance of diversifying the skilled trades workforce. Project PIPEline, an Ohio Latino Affairs Commission initiative designed to recruit and support diverse youth in pursuit of a career in skilled trades through mentorship and experiential education, is also discussed.

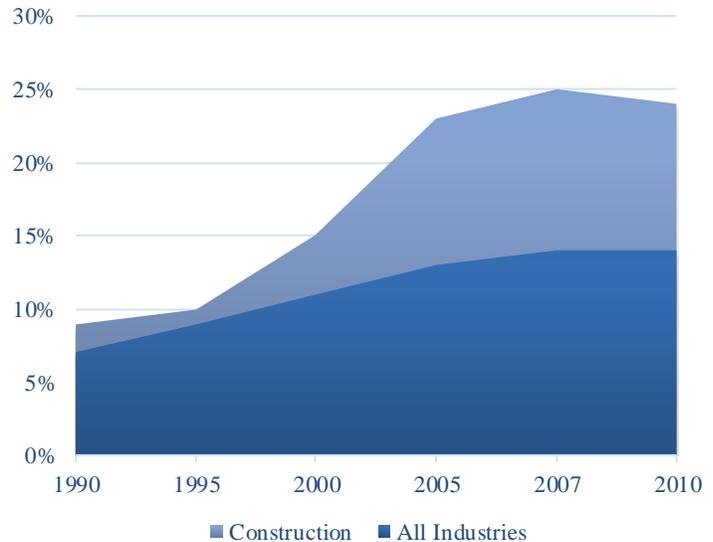
II. Latino Representation in the Trades Sector

A Profile of the Latino Workforce

In recent years, Hispanic contributions to the United States labor force have increased substantially. Between 1990 and 2010, the proportion of Hispanic workers doubled from 7 percent to 14 percent⁹. The construction industry saw even more pronounced growth, rising from 705,000 Hispanic workers (9 percent) to 2.2 Hispanic million workers (24 percent) in the same time frame¹⁰.

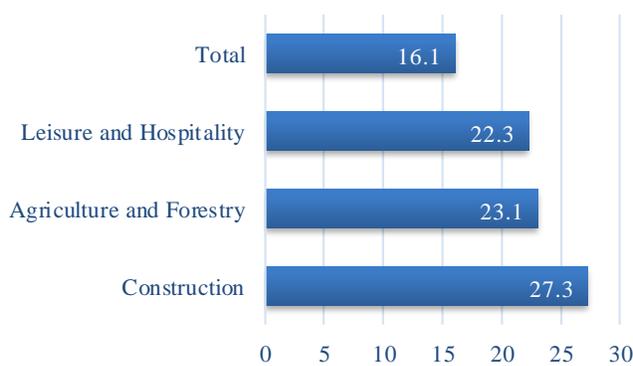
While Hispanic construction workers are more likely to reside in the South and West, there is significant variance at the state level. Hispanics account for less than 5 percent of the Ohio construction industry, but close to half in states like New Mexico, Texas, and California¹¹.

National Hispanic Workers, 1990-2010



Source: [The Center for Construction Research and Training](#)

National Hispanic Workers, 2014



Source: [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)

Latino Underrepresentation in Professional Trades

Today, Hispanics account for 17 percent of national employment and are considerably overrepresented in nearly every labor-intensive sector, such as drywall installation (63 percent) agriculture (53 percent); roofing (52 percent); painting, construction and maintenance (51 percent); flooring installation and maintenance (51 percent); cement masonry (49 percent); and housekeeping (47 percent)¹².

⁹ [Hispanic Workers in Construction and Other Industries](#). *The Center for Construction Research and Training*. 2017.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* [Hispanic Workers in Construction and Other Industries](#).

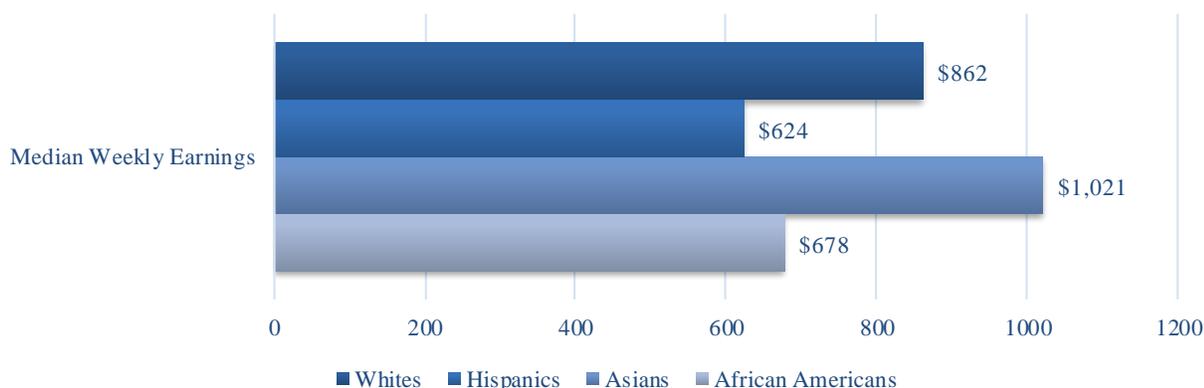
¹¹ *Ibid.* [Hispanic Workers in Construction and Other Industries](#).

¹² *Ibid.* [Labor force characteristics by race and ethnicity, 2016](#).

Wage Discrepancies

Hispanics are less likely than any other group to be employed in a management or professional occupation¹³. This underrepresentation in professional trades is reflected in the earnings of Hispanic workers, which are significantly lower than those of white workers. The median weekly earnings of full-time Hispanic workers in 2016 were \$624, compared to \$678 for African Americans, \$862 for whites, and \$1,021 for Asians¹⁴. Hispanic women earn less than any other major group, bringing home an average of \$586 a week, or 62 percent of the median earnings of white men¹⁵.

U.S. Earnings by Race/Ethnicity, 2016



Source: [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)

Increased Rate of Workplace Injuries and Fatalities

The overrepresentation of Hispanics in labor-intensive construction jobs means they are more likely to sustain fatal occupational injuries. Hispanics comprise 3.6 percent of Ohio's population, yet accounted for over 6 percent of fatal occupational injuries in 2016¹⁶. The construction sector proved to be among the more dangerous industries, with nearly 23 percent of all Ohio workplace fatalities occurring in construction and manufacturing jobs¹⁷.

This propensity for occupational injury has led Ohio construction workers to develop an increased risk for opioid addiction. An analysis performed by The Cleveland Plain Dealer found that construction workers in Ohio were seven times more likely to die of an opioid overdose last year than were workers in other professions¹⁸. This heightened susceptibility for death by overdose is directly linked to the increased vulnerability to severe injury that construction workers face.

¹³ Ibid. [Educational attainment and occupation groups by race and ethnicity in 2014.](#)

¹⁴ Ibid. [Labor force characteristics by race and ethnicity, 2016.](#)

¹⁵ Ibid. [Labor force characteristics by race and ethnicity, 2016.](#)

¹⁶ [Fatal Work Injuries in Ohio, 2016.](#) Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2016.

¹⁷ Ibid. [Fatal Work Injuries in Ohio, 2016.](#)

¹⁸ [Ohio construction workers seven times more likely to die of an opioid overdose in 2016.](#) The Plain Dealer. 2017.

Latino Underrepresentation in Unions

Background

In an effort to protect the rights of employees and employers alike, Congress enacted the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) in 1935¹⁹. This legislation encourages collective bargaining and seeks to protect workers from harmful labor and management practices within the private sector. As defined by this act, a labor union is any organization in which employees participate that works with employers to address grievances, labor disputes, wages, rates of pay, hours of employment, or conditions of work²⁰.

Implications of Union Membership for Latino Workers

According to a report issued by the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement, Latino construction workers are currently the most vulnerable workers nationwide²¹. Latino workers are not only disproportionately impacted by occupational injuries/fatalities and wage theft, but also possess the lowest rates of pension coverage and health insurance and earn the lowest wages²². As such, the Latino community may benefit from the myriad protections and benefits that unions offer their members. In 2014, the median weekly earnings of Latino union workers were nearly 40 percent higher than non-union Latino workers²³. Latinos who belonged to unions made approximately \$11,544 more per year and \$5.60 more per hour than their non-unionized counterparts²⁴. This trend continues among low wage workers, whose earnings increase by an average of 20.6 percent upon joining a union²⁵. Unionized workers are also more likely to have access to a multitude of employee benefits. In 2018, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that unionized workers were 27 percent more likely to have access to medical care, 31 percent more likely to have access to life insurance, and 19 percent more likely to have access to paid sick leave as compared to non-unionized workers²⁶.

Within the Latino community, women are particularly susceptible to exploitation in the workplace. While women constitute the majority in the greater labor movement, Latina women are less likely to be represented by a union than any other group. As of 2014, unionized Latina workers earned 42.12 percent more each week than nonunionized Latinas and maintained access to numerous benefits necessary to address unethical practices and achieve gender parity in the skilled trades²⁷. Undocumented Latino workers remain especially susceptible to exploitation. These workers are overrepresented in low-skilled, labor-intensive jobs, and therefore are more likely to suffer workplace injuries and fatalities or fall

¹⁹ [National Labor Relations Act](#), National Labor Relations Board. 2018.

²⁰ Ibid. [National Labor Relations Act](#).

²¹ Ibid. [Latino Workers and Unions](#).

²² Ibid. [Latino Workers and Unions](#).

²³ Ibid. [Latino Workers and Unions](#).

²⁴ Ibid. [Latino Workers and Unions](#).

²⁵ Ibid. [Latino Workers and Unions](#).

²⁶ [Employee Benefits in the United States](#), Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2017.

²⁷ Ibid. [Latino Workers and Unions](#).

victim to human rights and labor violations. Additionally, due to their fear of deportation, undocumented workers are often hesitant to speak out about the injustices they experience. While they may believe themselves to be alone in the workplace, undocumented workers have access to the same protections and rights that all workers possess. In 1984, the United States Supreme Court ruled that undocumented workers are included in their definition of an employee and as such are covered by the National Labor Relations Act²⁸. This landmark case granted undocumented workers the right to organize, elect a union, and participate in the collective bargaining process. This not only serves to increase their access to benefits and fair wages, but also provides an outlet through which they may gain equal rights in the workplace.

Costs and Barriers to Union Entry for Latinos

Despite data suggesting that Latino workers and Latino-owned companies could benefit from union membership, several barriers keep them from entering. Before they may apply for a union job, workers must pass a variety of tests. According to Jenice Contreras, Executive Director of the Northeast Ohio Hispanic Center for Economic Development, such testing often proves challenging to Latinos due to language barriers. “Following the hurricane in Puerto Rico, 1,300 families relocated to northeast Ohio. They may have been amazing electricians, plumbers or carpenters on the island, but they’re not going to get a union job unless they have the language skills to pass a test that has nothing to do with their skillset or ability to perform²⁹”. Even those companies that do meet union requirements and establish themselves in their communities despite fierce competition may find that they are unable to unionize. Businesses are often granted entry only after leveraging their connections with companies that are current members, and Latinos are less likely to have such relationships due to low rates of union membership within their community. According to Contreras, “the Latino community does not have the same social capital that other communities have within unions and that hinders our ability to work our way into certain places. It heavily impacts the ability of Latinos to enter the union labor force³⁰.”

Despite their qualifications, Latinos and other minority workers may be hesitant to unionize. One explanation for this reluctance may be found in economic data from such workers’ nations of origin. In the country of Mexico, for example, only one percent of construction workers are union members³¹. Those who receive few of the protections that characterize union membership here in the United State and may in fact be more vulnerable to corruption in the workplace. Newly-arrived immigrants likely harbor the same expectations for the unions in their new homes.

Distrust may also stem from the discriminatory practices that historically existed within labor unions. One such conglomerate by the name of the Asiatic Exclusionary League was formed for the primary

²⁸ *Sure-Tan, Inc. v. NLRB*, 467 U.S. 883 (1984)

²⁹ Jenice Contreras (Northeast Ohio Hispanic Center for Economic Development), interviewed by Caroline Filbrun, 2018.

³⁰ *Ibid.* Jenice Contreras.

³¹ De La Garza, Dr. Enrique, and Hugo Sarmiento. [Mexico informal worker organizing inventory](#). UCLA. 2012.

purpose of advancing racist and anti-immigration platforms³². While not all unions were expressly discriminatory, and some would argue that racist practices are uncommon in today's unions, Jenice Contreras believes that unions tend to lack the cultural competency necessary to successfully employ workers of color. "The general sentiment from our construction firms is that unions are not welcoming. They are not inclusive and do not embrace diversity—even though it can only make them stronger³³."

Regardless of the legitimacy of such perceptions, employees and employers alike could benefit from changing them. As the state of Ohio continues to develop, a diversified union labor force would allow project owners to meet the growing need for unique skillsets while simultaneously fulfilling their contracts with unions and requirements surrounding local hire and diversity and inclusion.

³² Arnold, Katherine R. *Anti-Immigration in the United States: A Historical Encyclopedia*. Greenwood Press. 2011.

³³ *Ibid.* Jenice Contreras.



III. Barriers to Entry in Professional Trades

Background

Skilled trade professionals in Ohio must complete an apprenticeship program in order to be designated as a “journeyworker”, which signifies they have the skills and experience needed to work in their selected trade. Registered Apprenticeships combine 2,000 hours of on-the-job training and at least 144 hours of classroom work, where apprentices learn industry-accepted ways to perform jobs effectively and safely³⁴. In Ohio, more than 15,000 employers participate in the state’s nearly 1,000 Registered Apprenticeship programs in fields ranging from aerospace and construction, to energy and manufacturing³⁵. Ohio’s more than 18,000 apprentices and 15,000 employers make it third in the nation for the number of Registered Apprentices, and seventh for the number of Registered Apprenticeship sponsors³⁶.

Applicants must meet a basic set of criteria to apply for Registered Apprenticeships in Ohio:

- HS Diploma or GED
- At least 18 years of age (16 years of age in some instances)
- Pass a drug test
- Possess a valid Driver’s License and reliable transportation
- Physically able to perform the tasks required for the job

Certain Registered Apprenticeship programs in Ohio like the Construction Craft Laborers and Pipe Trades, administer assessment tests to its candidates, while other programs such as the Sheet Metal Trades and Electrical Trades have an interview process in place as well³⁷.

Lack of Exposure

While Ohio boasts among the nation’s largest participation of Registered Apprenticeship programs, the significant shortage of skilled tradespersons coupled with low participation rates of racial/ethnic minorities in the trades reveals an urgent need to mitigate the barriers in place for many people. The lack of exposure to vocational education during one’s formative years has left many unaware of the many career options available to them.³⁸

Christine Boucher, Career Development Specialist for Eastland-Fairfield Career & Technical Schools (EFCTS), says that while some public schools in Ohio feature career center visitation days for their high school students, for many this is too late. “My role at Fairfield is to bring awareness and exploration to

³⁴ Apprenticeship Programs Fact Sheet. *Ohio Department of Job and Family Services*. 2017.

³⁵ Ibid. Apprenticeship Programs Fact Sheet.

³⁶ Ibid. Apprenticeship Programs Fact Sheet.

³⁷ [Apprenticeship Opportunities](#). Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. 2018.

³⁸ [Barriers to Attracting Apprentices and Completing their Apprenticeships](#). *Employment Ontario*. 2015.

kids from K-8, giving them opportunities to explore rather than waiting until 10th grade to make a decision to go to the Career Center based on a two-hour visit,” Boucher says³⁹. “Prior to my employment here, they’d come for a couple of hours, and that was when they made the decision. Of course, that’s not reaching all kids across all demographics. But that was the realization that made this position open up at Eastland Fairfield. It was at the request of our businesses and our schools that we needed to get information to students at a younger age⁴⁰.”

Todd Weinbrecht, Site Coordinator of Ohio Carpenters’ Joint Apprenticeship’s Columbus Training Center, echoes this sentiment. “I think that we need to start approaching students earlier in their career, such as the eighth grade. In this facility, we approach the juniors and seniors. If we took a stance and approached these students earlier—in seventh and eighth grade—then at least they’d know who we are. And it would give them a little bit of insight as to what we can offer them when we come back and see them in the years to come⁴¹.”

The elimination of “shop class” or technical education classes has played a significant role in hindering exposure to the kind of hands-on experience that may lead to a career in a skilled trade⁴². Many public schools across the nation and in Ohio have eliminated technical education classes as they are no longer needed to graduate high school, and because schools in dire financial straits are having to make difficult budget cuts. While students in Ohio are required to complete five “Elective” units to graduate, technical education is not compulsory, and students may take any combination of foreign language, fine arts, business, career-technical education, family and consumer sciences, technology, agricultural education, or English language arts, mathematics, science or social studies courses not otherwise required to graduate⁴³. If children were exposed to more hands-on careers from an early age their perception of the skilled trades professions may be more appealing⁴⁴.

Negative Stigmas

The skilled trades have long battled negative stigmas that revolve around a perception that hands-on jobs are less valuable than those that require a four-year degree⁴⁵. Negative attitudes toward trades are often perpetuated by parents and educators who push college upon students citing skilled trades as low-paying, dirty, unstable, dangerous and offering little possibility of career advancement⁴⁶.

A 2015 study conducted by *Employment Ontario* on skilled trades and apprenticeship awareness highlighted the negative attitudes and perceptions surrounding careers in skilled trades as key barriers to recruitment in the field⁴⁷. The study found that only 32 percent of youth in 2005 said they would

³⁹ Christine Boucher (Eastland-Fairfield Career & Technical Schools), interviewed by Caroline Filbrun, 2018.

⁴⁰ Ibid. Christine Boucher.

⁴¹ Todd Weinbrecht (Ohio Carpenters’ Joint Apprenticeship), interviewed by Caroline Filbrun, 2018.

⁴² Brown, Tara Tiger. [The Death of Shop Class and America’s Skilled Workforce](#). *Forbes*. 2012.

⁴³ [Ohio Graduation Checklist](#). *Ohio Department of Education*. 2014.

⁴⁴ Ibid. [Barriers to Attracting Apprentices and Completing their Apprenticeships](#).

⁴⁵ Patane, Matthew. [Skilled trades employers fight ‘dirty jobs’ stereotype](#). *The Des Moines Register*. 2014.

⁴⁶ Ibid. [Barriers to Attracting Apprentices and Completing their Apprenticeships](#).

⁴⁷ [Skilled Trades and Apprenticeship Awareness and Perception Study](#). *Canadian Apprenticeship Forum*. 2017.

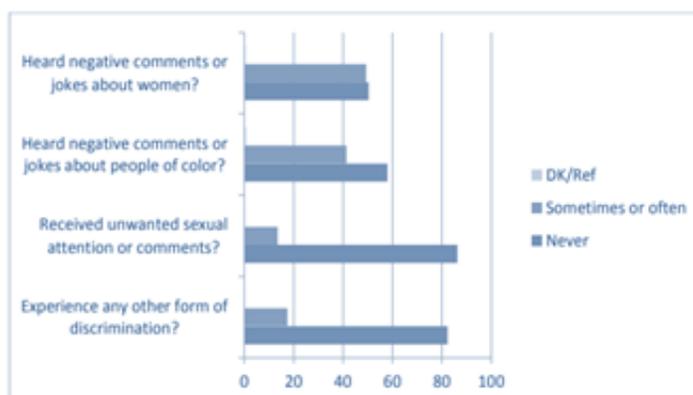
consider a career in skilled trades, and only 14 percent indicated that their guidance counselors have recommended skilled trades as a career option⁴⁸. Similarly, only 25 percent of youth said they were aware of all the career options available in skilled trades, and only 28 percent of parents have encouraged their children to pursue this option⁴⁹.

Despite the pervasiveness of this stigma, many educators and administrators have observed a positive shift in how skilled trades are being advertised to students and parents in recent years. According to Todd Weinbrecht, “the skilled trades are being pushed harder today in public schools than they ever have been in the past. I believe that on the education side of things, people are starting to open their eyes and see that a four-year education—and the large bill that comes afterwards—is not always the best option⁵⁰.”

Discrimination

In addition to stigmas held by the general population, many racial/ethnic minorities hold a perception of skilled trades work environments as being a “good old boys club” and hostile and intolerant to their communities⁵¹. These perceptions may hold some merit as some studies have shown that a sizeable proportion of skilled trade apprentices have faced discrimination or harassment of some kind⁵².

Figure 6. Forms of Discrimination or Harassment Witnessed or Experienced by Apprentices



Source: [Portland State University](#)

In a survey of apprentices conducted by Portland State University, 38 percent of respondents reported experiencing discrimination or harassment of some sort during their time as an apprentice⁵³. This figure was 68 percent for female apprentices and 28 percent for male apprentices. Among all women, women of color were significantly more likely (65.5 percent) to report experiencing discrimination and/or unwanted sexual attention, as compared to (51.6 percent) white female apprentices.

The survey also revealed that 30 percent of apprentices had experienced discrimination or harassment because of their race or ethnicity, and over 40 percent had reported hearing negative comments or jokes

⁴⁸ Ibid. [Skilled Trades and Apprenticeship A wareness and Perception Study](#).

⁴⁹ Ibid. [Skilled Trades and Apprenticeship A wareness and Perception Study](#).

⁵⁰ Ibid. Todd Weinbrecht.

⁵¹ Burd-Sharps, Sarah, Kristen Lewis, and Maura Kelly. [Building a More Diverse Skilled Workforce in the Highway Trades: Are Oregon’s Current Efforts Working?](#) Portland State University. 2014.

⁵² Kelly, Maura, Wilkins on, Lindsey, Pisciotta, Maura, and Larry S. Williams. [When Working Hard Is Not Enough for Female and Racial/Ethnic Minority Apprentices in the Highway Trades](#). *Eastern Sociological Forum*. 2015.

⁵³ Ibid. [Building a More Diverse Skilled Workforce in the Highway Trades: Are Oregon’s Current Efforts Working?](#)

about people of color on the job⁵⁴. Other instances of discrimination reported were based on age, physical ability, sexual identity and lack of job experience.

Leaders in the skilled trades industry stress the importance of creating an environment that is welcoming to workers of all backgrounds. Joshua Rodriguez, a representative of the Indiana/Kentucky/Ohio Regional Council of Carpenters (IKORCC), says he checks in with his workers each day to ensure that they feel supported. “Everyone’s getting a fair chance here; if you don’t understand something or if you’re struggling, we’re getting someone in here today that can help you⁵⁵”. Rodriguez also details the way in which Latino tradespeople are quick to share their positive experiences with friends and family, in turn introducing new workers to the trades. “We’ve got something like 60 new members, and about 55 of those are Latinos. Word of mouth spreads very fast within this community⁵⁶.”

Logistical Challenges

Accessing transportation continues to be a major hurdle for Latinos who are twice as likely to use public transportation daily and less likely to have access to an automobile⁵⁷. The Portland State University survey of apprentices reported that dealing with the logistical requirements of getting to and from job sites was a common concern, both in terms of access and cost⁵⁸. Nearly half of apprentices surveyed said that paying for gas to get to and from a job site was a problem⁵⁹.

High school Career Center teachers and apprenticeship coordinators alike validate these sentiments and say that finding reliable transportation is not always easy to come by for their students. According to Christine Boucher, the transportation barrier is a complex issue that often keeps students from fully participating in their education. “It’s not just about money, because we could get dollars for driver’s education to the students. It then becomes that there’s no car for them to drive. Parents don’t want to pay the insurance or the additional gas expense. Even if they are able to come to one of our skilled trade programs, they would be not able to fully participate in their field because they don’t have transportation⁶⁰.”

Boucher went on to speak of one Latina student whose transportation challenges were compounded by the deportation of her parents. “She was in the pre-nursing program in Fairfield, so she would go to her classes and then ride the shuttle from Fairfield back to Eastland to get on the COTA bus and take it to her job. It was two hours each way; two hours getting there and two hours getting back. I mean, she doesn’t have parents here to help her with that, she’s really on her own⁶¹.”

⁵⁴ Ibid. [Building a More Diverse Skilled Workforce in the Highway Trades: Are Oregon’s Current Efforts Working?](#)

⁵⁵ Joshua Rodriguez (Indiana/Kentucky/Ohio Regional Council of Carpenters), interviewed by Caroline Filbrun, 2018.

⁵⁶ Ibid. Joshua Rodriguez.

⁵⁷ Anderson, Monica. [Who relies on public transit in the U.S.](#) *Pew Research Center*. 2016.

⁵⁸ Ibid. [Building a More Diverse Skilled Workforce in the Highway Trades: Are Oregon’s Current Efforts Working?](#)

⁵⁹ Ibid. [Building a More Diverse Skilled Workforce in the Highway Trades: Are Oregon’s Current Efforts Working?](#)

⁶⁰ Ibid. Christine Boucher.

⁶¹ Ibid. Christine Boucher.

Professional Skills

Employers from across all job spectrums have reasoned that a lack of “soft skills” or professional skills can keep prospective employees or apprentices out of a company. While solid academic skills are important to the skilled trades, professional skills are required for success in the workplace as well. Skills such as reliability, punctuality, work ethic and living drug free can be barriers to entry for many would-be apprentices. The 2015 *Employment Ontario* study reported that 10 percent of employers did not hire certain apprentice candidates because of their low academic and professional skills⁶². The employers reported that the lack of these essential skills presented substantial costs in time, money and energy that were detrimental to their businesses.

It is a cost that Todd Weinbrecht is all too familiar with. As Weinbrecht prepares apprentices for a career in the skilled trades, he strives to emphasize the importance of professionalism. “When we’re talking soft skills, we’re talking showing up, and we’re talking showing up on time. Those are definitely the two main issues. We have got to instill in them that the importance of showing up on time every day is, on a scale of one to ten, probably a twelve⁶³.”

Ohio’s construction and manufacturing field has especially felt the economic impact of drug use. Michael Sherwin, CEO of Columbiana Boiler in Ohio said that too many prospective employers are failing their drug tests. “We are always looking for people and have standard ads at all times, but at least 25 percent fail the drug tests. The lightest product we make is 1,500 pounds, and they go up to 250,000 pounds. If something goes wrong, it won’t hurt our workers. It’ll kill them – and that’s why we can’t take any risks with drugs.” Sherwin noted that his company forgoes roughly \$200,000 worth of orders each quarter because of the employee shortage⁶⁴.

The upsurge in failed drug tests by American workers partly stems from an increase in drug testing by large corporations and small companies alike, however data also suggest that a growing number of Americans use illicit drugs – especially marijuana and opioids⁶⁵. Quest Diagnostics noted an increase for the second consecutive year in the percentage of American workers who tested positive for drugs, with 2013 being the first year in a decade to experience an increase⁶⁶. While Hispanics are statistically less likely to be illicit drug users (8.8 percent) than whites (9.5 percent) and African Americans (10.5 percent), the potential for drug use to be a barrier to entry into the skilled trades is very real for many candidates⁶⁷.

⁶² Ibid. [Barriers to Attracting Apprentices and Completing their Apprenticeships](#).

⁶³ Ibid. Todd Weinbrecht.

⁶⁴ Schwartz, Nelson D. [Economy Needs Workers, but Drug Tests Take a Toll](#). *New York Times*. 2017.

⁶⁵ Calmes, Jackie. [Hiring Hurdle: Finding Workers Who Can Pass a Drug Test](#). *New York Times*. 2016.

⁶⁶ Ibid. [Hiring Hurdle: Finding Workers Who Can Pass a Drug Test](#).

⁶⁷ [Results from the 2013 National Survey on Drug Use and Health](#). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 2014.

Language Barriers

Over 730,000 Ohioans speak a language other than English, with 262,414 or 35.8 percent of these individuals reporting that they speak English less than “very well”.⁶⁸ Of the 84,000 foreign-born Hispanics living in Ohio, nine out of ten report that they speak Spanish at home⁶⁹. Language barriers are among the biggest barriers that foreign-born Latinos and other immigrants face when attempting to enter a trade profession. In general, those who lack a firm grasp of the English language are often limited in the range of employment opportunities that are available to them. The majority—if not all—of apprenticeships in Ohio require a firm grasp of the English language. Classroom instruction is provided completely in English and job sites need workers to be able to communicate quickly and effectively in the work place. Even those who may have a firm grasp of speaking English may not feel comfortable writing and taking assessments in English, which can inhibit them from applying for an apprenticeship.

While English Learners are often able to access English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, it can be difficult to find time to continue attending classes upon starting an apprenticeship due to the demands of the on-the-job training and classroom work⁷⁰. Few, if any, apprenticeship organizations in Ohio have formal partnerships with community organizations to provide targeted English language support as part of the curriculum to support these individuals.

Karen Ross, Coordinator of Eastland-Fairfield Career & Technical Schools’ Adult and Basic Literacy Education (ABLE) program, says that employment papers present a unique challenge for immigrant workers. “Often times, they just sign things. They don’t really understand health benefits and they don’t know why Social Security is being taken out of their checks. One time, I was working with a woman in my class at the company and she was very downhearted, she almost started crying, because she had been in an accident on the way to work and she was trying to decide how to pay all of the bills. She didn’t realize that she has insurance through the company, so she was under so much stress, thinking ‘how am I going to make these payments?’ And your heart breaks because you think, ‘how many other people are having that same issue?’”⁷¹

⁶⁸ [American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates](#). U.S. Census Bureau. 2016.

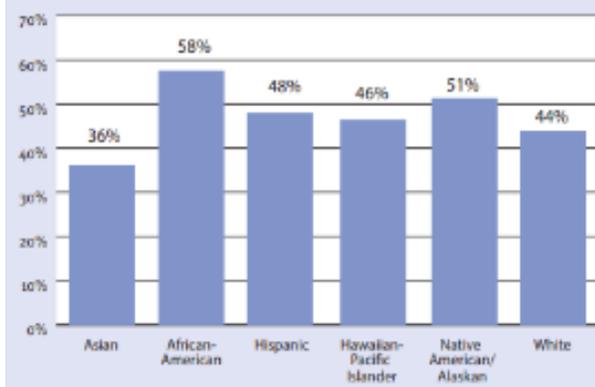
⁶⁹ [Ohio Hispanic Americans](#). Ohio Development Services Agency. 2016.

⁷⁰ [Barriers to apprenticeship](#). Estyn. 2014.

⁷¹ Karen Ross (Adult and Basic Literacy Education Program), interviewed by Caroline Filbrun, 2018.

Barriers to Completing an Apprenticeship

DIAGRAM 10: PERCENT OF APPRENTICESHIP AGREEMENTS CANCELLED BY RACE⁷² (New Apprentices Federally Registered between 2006 and 2007)



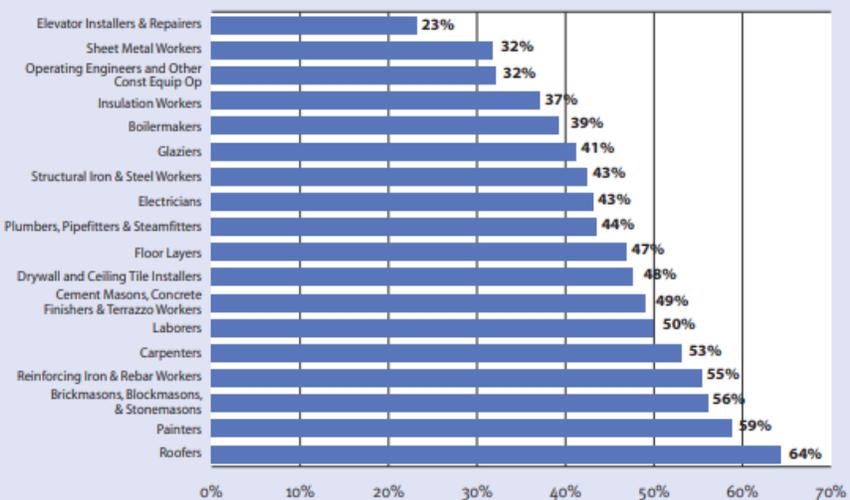
Source: [Aspen Institute](#)

While the barriers to entering an apprenticeship are varied, completing an apprenticeship comes with its own set of challenges, as nearly half of apprentices in the construction trades cancel out of their apprenticeships⁷². The Aspen Institute in 2013 issued a report on the state of completion in construction apprenticeships and highlighted best practices as they relate to improving completion rates.

The study found that minorities and women canceled out of construction apprenticeships at higher rates than white men⁷³. Approximately 49 percent of minority apprentices canceled out of their programs compared to 44 percent of white apprentices, and 51 percent of women did not complete their apprenticeships compared to 26 percent of men⁷⁴. Data collected over several years suggest that high rates of cancellation have always been an issue, and that women and minorities are less likely to complete the apprenticeship program.

While certain factors are linked to higher dropout rates, the most common causes of apprenticeship cancellation are highly diverse and varied. The Aspen Institute did not rank the most common causes of cancellation for this reason, but rather summarized the overarching challenges, which are displayed in the table on page 16.

DIAGRAM 5: PERCENT OF CONSTRUCTION APPRENTICESHIP AGREEMENTS CANCELLED BY TRADE (New Apprentices Federally Registered between 2006 and 2007)



Source: [Aspen Institute](#)

⁷² Helmer, Matt, and Dave Altstadt. [Apprenticeship Completion and Cancellation in the Building Trades](#). The Aspen Institute. 2013.

⁷³ Ibid. [Apprenticeship Completion and Cancellation in the Building Trades](#).

⁷⁴ Ibid. [Apprenticeship Completion and Cancellation in the Building Trades](#).

BOX 2: SUMMARY OF CHALLENGES FOR CONSTRUCTION APPRENTICES	
Overarching Challenge	Description
Financial Security	Apprentices may experience a number of economic hardships during training. The industry's cyclical nature means lay-offs are frequent, and apprentices often experience a lack of work. Some apprentices earn low wages the first few years, and this, plus poor saving habits and other money management skills or financial literacy, can cause difficulty maintaining financial security.
Workplace Environment	Apprentices face a work environment full of challenges. A lot of construction work is physically tiring, dirty and occurs outside in tough weather. Apprentices may enter construction work without fully understanding the job's nature and demands. They may not know what the proper behavior, attitudes and actions are on the job site, which can lead to misconduct. Apprentices may work on a job where the OJT provided by a journey worker is limited or poor, leaving them without sufficient opportunity to develop their skills. Initiation also may go too far into hazing of apprentices. Women and minorities, in particular, may face abusive remarks or actions.
School and Academic Skills	Being a successful apprentice means being a good student in the classroom and, for many trades, having good math skills. Apprentices may have limited basic math and reading skills and need additional remediation or academic supports to succeed. They may lack test-taking strategies or study skills. The demands of working during the day and going to a school classroom at night may cause scheduling difficulties, if not exhaustion. Classroom instructors may lack knowledge of adult education or teaching experience and, therefore, instruction may not be up to par.
Personal and Life Issues	For all apprentices, "life happens" during their apprenticeship. They may struggle to balance family, work, and school responsibilities and schedules. Many apprentices have children, so arranging and paying for child care can be challenging. Working in construction often requires a great deal of travel, so having money for a car, fuel and car repair is a necessity. For some, substance abuse or issues with mental health can wreak havoc on their chances of succeeding in an apprenticeship.

Source: [Aspen Institute](#)

For some apprentices, financial hurdles proved insurmountable, as temporary lay-offs are part of the nature of construction projects, and employees regularly change jobs and work for different employers. The lack of consistent paychecks and on-the-job training opportunities takes a toll on many apprentices, particularly among non-traditional populations. The Aspen Institute found that women and minorities tended to accumulate work hours at a slower rate than their white male counterparts, which may help explain their higher cancelation rates. Layoffs and low starting wages coupled with a limited understanding of financial literacy and planning can make it difficult to remain in an apprenticeship program.

The workplace environment can have a considerable influence on an apprentice's determination to complete an apprenticeship. Physically tiring and grueling work conditions together with being assigned laborious tasks make the workplace difficult to endure at times. The Aspen Institute study found that when other school and life challenges exacerbate less than spectacular work conditions, even the most committed apprentices may end up on the verge of dropping out. A typical apprentice workday begins early in the morning and runs well into the evening with classes. Apprentices are often left with menial tasks such as cleaning job sites or unloading materials, making for a long and monotonous day.

While workplace hazing may be experienced by apprentices of every race and ethnicity, women and people of color have reported more accounts of abusive remarks or hostile acts directed at them because of their gender or ethnicity. A survey of apprentices in the heavy highway trades in Oregon found that 24 percent of minority men and 30 percent of minority women reported experiencing racial/ethnic discrimination at the workplace. The survey also found that 40 percent of non-Hispanic white women and 50 percent of minority women reported experiencing gender discrimination on the job⁷⁵. Other studies also reveal instances of racial slurs and hazing directed at minority men in apprenticeship programs. Due to the few discrimination complaints filed by apprentices, there is often a misconception that the workplace environment is welcoming toward all apprentices.

Contrarily, scholars have found that women and minorities often prefer to maintain amicable relations with their coworkers by ignoring their behavior instead of reporting sexist or racist comments⁷⁶. A study conducted by Portland State University found that women felt that the most challenging part of working in a skilled trade is not the job, but rather dealing with prevailing attitudes regarding women not belonging in the trades. The study also found that men of color did not receive the same amount of informal mentoring on the job as white men received. Most journeyworkers, supervisors and foremen are white males creating an advantage for white men in developing personal relationships and building a professional network. Only 38 percent of women of color, 57 percent of white women and 60 percent of men of color reported receiving mentoring on the job, as compared to 79 percent of white men. Additionally, men of color were more likely to be labeled as lazy or bad workers⁷⁷. The study concluded that, “when these issues are routinely addressed only on an individual level, the result is the perpetuation of a workplace culture in which usually mild but regularly occurring harassment and discrimination based on gender and race are tolerated.”⁷⁸

Personal issues also cause people to cancel apprenticeships as it can be difficult to juggle family, work, and school responsibilities. Both white women and women of color reported having difficulty arranging child care around their demanding work and school schedules. An electrical apprentice in Cincinnati said she constantly worried about how taking time off work to care for her daughter would impact her job security. “It seems like every other week, there is something for my daughter to take care of that I need to take some time off work to help her with, and I worry a lot about how that is going to affect me getting work assignments if things get slow. Are they going to overlook me for some guy because I’m a single parent and they know I need to take off an hour sometimes to help my kid?”⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Ibid. [Apprenticeship Completion and Cancellation in the Building Trades.](#)

⁷⁶ Ibid. [When Working Hard Is Not Enough for Female and Racial/Ethnic Minority Apprentices in the Highway Trades.](#)

⁷⁷ Ibid. [When Working Hard Is Not Enough for Female and Racial/Ethnic Minority Apprentices in the Highway Trades.](#)

⁷⁸ Ibid. [When Working Hard Is Not Enough for Female and Racial/Ethnic Minority Apprentices in the Highway Trades.](#)

⁷⁹ Ibid. [Apprenticeship Completion and Cancellation in the Building Trades.](#)

IV. Opportunities for Latino Recruitment in Professional Trades

Academics, transportation, and other issues continue to be common barriers to completing an apprenticeship and are important to understand to help mitigate these obstacles. Promoting the advancement of minorities and women in apprenticeships will require more targeted outreach and a specific strategy to ensure diversity and inclusion in apprenticeship programs.

There is ample evidence indicating that members of the Latino community would be excellent candidates for a career in this industry. One potential point of entry for apprenticeship program managers and other skilled trades recruiters would be during a student’s enrollment in secondary school, where racially/ethnically diverse students are less likely to graduate and pursue a postsecondary education than their peers.

Level of Education 18 and Over, 2015

	White	African-American	Hispanic	Asian
Total	157, 151	28,369	37,509	13,723
High School Diploma	46, 241	9,741	11,529	2,516
Associate’s Degree	15,957	2,628	2,565	850
Bachelor’s Degree	34,072	3,742	3,611	4,247
Master’s Degree	13,904	1,611	1,099	1,806
Doctorate/Professional Degree	5,254	401	384	857

Source: *National Center for Education Statistics*

Hispanic individuals are less likely than their white, African American, and Asian/Pacific Islander counterparts to possess bachelor’s, master’s, doctorate, and other professional degrees. In 2015, only 16.4 percent of Hispanic persons aged 25-29 possessed a bachelor’s degree, as compared to 43.0 percent of whites, 21.3 percent of African Americans, and 62.8 percent of Asian/Pacific Islanders⁸⁰. Similarly, only 3.2 percent of Hispanics possessed a master’s degree, while 10.1 percent of whites, 5 percent of African Americans, and 21.6 percent of Asian/Pacific Islanders had obtained such a degree⁸¹.

⁸⁰ [Digest of Education Statistics](#). National Center for Education Statistics. 2016.

⁸¹ Ibid. [Digest of Education Statistics](#).

Additionally, Hispanic enrollment and achievement in higher education is increasing at a slightly slower rate than students of other ethnicities⁸². Since 1995, the rate of individuals over 25 who have obtained a bachelor's degree has increased from 23.0 to 32.5 percent⁸³. In comparison, the rate of all Hispanics over 25 in possession of a Bachelor's degree has increased from 9.3 to 15.5 percent⁸⁴.

A variety of barriers serve to dissuade Hispanic youth from pursuing a secondary education. Perhaps the most salient is the rising cost of attendance. While financial aid is available, it is not always accessible. In fact, over 60 percent of respondents in a recent study conducted by UnidosUS found that simply understanding the process was the most challenging part of obtaining financial aid⁸⁵. Researching and securing loans and grants is a feat that is especially difficult for first-generation students whose parents are unfamiliar with the process. In addition to the tuition and fees required by the university, other costs such as books, food, housing, and travel home can prevent Latinos from attending postsecondary institutions. Another particularly impactful deterrent is the emphasis that many Latino families place on working. Many Latino youth are encouraged to begin earning money rather than enroll in a college or university.

Careful consideration of the aforementioned barriers reveals that a skilled trades apprenticeship may be a better fit than a traditional four-year degree program for some Latino students. The comparatively low costs associated with a skilled-trades apprenticeship program would be far less restrictive to low-income Latino students, and the emphasis that such programs place on hard work and professional development would likely resonate well with families.

Another pertinent consideration is the prevalence of construction employment in Latino immigrants' countries of origin. With over 45 percent of Latino Ohioans reporting an ancestral link to Mexico⁸⁶, it is of considerable relevance that the construction industry is among the largest in the country's economy⁸⁷. Mexico's construction industry has only continued to grow since it was measured as accounting for nearly 9 percent of the Mexican workforce in the 2000's⁸⁸. These figures suggest that a sizeable portion of Ohio's Latino community may have experience or interest in the construction industry, and therefore may be suitable candidates for participation in an apprenticeship program or a career in the skilled trades.

⁸² Ibid. [Digest of Education Statistics](#).

⁸³ Ibid. [Digest of Education Statistics](#).

⁸⁴ Ibid. [Digest of Education Statistics](#).

⁸⁵ Ibid. [Digest of Education Statistics](#).

⁸⁶ [Getting In, Staying In – Community Perspectives on the Barriers to Latino Postsecondary Education](#). National Council of La Raza. 2015.

⁸⁷ [Ohio Hispanic Americans](#). Ohio Developmental Services Agency. 2017.

⁸⁷ Ibid. [Mexico informal worker organizing inventory](#).

⁸⁸ Ibid. [Mexico informal worker organizing inventory](#).

V. *Best Practices for Latino Recruitment in Professional Trades*

Best Practices for Equity and Inclusion in Professional Trades

Because apprenticeship recruitment and completion can be especially challenging for women and racial/ethnic minorities, there are some recommendations and best practices that policy makers, apprenticeship programs, businesses and industry leaders should consider in their recruitment and retention efforts in racial/ethnic minority communities.

Targeted Recruitment of Racial/Ethnic Minorities

Targeted recruitment and outreach campaigns to racial/ethnic minorities are important to attracting diverse workers. Campaigns should 1) focus on creating more awareness of skilled trade apprenticeship opportunities, and 2) address negative perceptions of the industry as being a low-paying, dirty work environment that is not friendly to minorities⁸⁹. Highlighting apprenticeship opportunities as a form of postsecondary education may also help boost the appeal of the profession⁹⁰. Outreach efforts should begin as early as elementary or middle school to help mitigate the lack of exposure during one's formative years.

A critical component of the outreach strategy is the development of partnerships with schools and local organizations that represent and serve the targeted population⁹¹. Schools and local organizations are the bridges into diverse communities, as they are a trusted source and have built extensive networks within their communities that will allow recruitment efforts to achieve their full potential.

When engaging the Latino community in Ohio, it is important to build relationships with schools that are home to sizeable Hispanic populations, as well as local Hispanic social service organizations. The Ohio Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs and the Ohio Hispanic Chambers of Commerce are also key partners with extensive networks that can assist with outreach efforts. Partnerships are especially relevant in New American communities where a sizeable portion of the population may not speak English. Establishing formal partnerships with community organizations to provide targeted English language support as part of the curriculum can help address some of the language barriers that would-be apprentices experience⁹².

As a 2015 study by The Aspen Institute emphasizes, outreach alone is not sufficient to recruit and retain racial/ethnic minorities in apprenticeships. The list on page 22 outlines the following actions that federal and state agencies can take to promote a more diverse pool of apprenticeship applicants.

⁸⁹ Colborn, John, and Nneka Jenkins. [Recasting American Apprenticeship: A Summary of The Barriers to Apprenticeship Expansion Research Project](#). *The Aspen Institute*. 2015.

⁹⁰ Ibid. [Recasting American Apprenticeship: A Summary of The Barriers to Apprenticeship Expansion Research Project](#).

⁹¹ Ibid. [Recasting American Apprenticeship: A Summary of The Barriers to Apprenticeship Expansion Research Project](#).

⁹² Ibid. [Barriers to apprenticeship](#).

- 1) Increase the number of state staff hours spent reviewing programs for compliance with affirmative action requirements;
- 2) Take a tougher stance in determining whether sponsors have made “good faith efforts” to comply with affirmative action requirements;
- 3) Establish incentives, in the form of increased state support for programs that adhere to female and minority enrollment goals based on the Department of Labor’s four-point analysis of labor availability, instead of the apprenticeship participation rate from the preceding year;
- 4) Provide technical assistance to program sponsors on effective outreach and recruitment strategies;
- 5) Facilitate partnerships between program sponsors and women/minority groups and employment service providers seeking to refer individuals to programs; and
- 6) Report apprenticeship enrollment and demographic figures accurately and fully on an annual basis.⁹³

Fostering a Harassment-Free Work Environment

The underrepresentation of people of color and women in the trades professions makes them more vulnerable to hazing or harassment on the job⁹⁴. Many apprenticeship programs, businesses and industry leaders are already taking proactive steps to foster a culture that does not tolerate hazing or harassment. It is critical that employers foster a safe work environment that is welcoming to minorities and women.

Companies can begin by openly stating their commitment to diversity as well as a nondiscrimination clause on website and outreach material⁹⁵. The creation of social support networks for diverse staff can be beneficial as well⁹⁶. Support networks can offer a wide range of benefits to both employees and the employer, as senior leaders within the company can hear directly from employees regarding their experiences, as well as any challenges they are facing within the organization. These networks also provide a forum to facilitate dialogue around race, ethnicity and gender in the workplace, with a goal to narrow any gaps in recruitment and retention. The shared experience of members allows individuals to network, gain mentors, discuss important issues and obtain advice without judgement.

Employers should also consider partnering with minority-serving non-profits and other community-based organizations to gain support and guidance in training supervisory staff and enforcing policies that combat harassment⁹⁷.

⁹³ Ibid. [Recasting American Apprenticeship: A Summary of The Barriers to Apprenticeship Expansion Research Project.](#)

⁹⁴ Ibid. [Building a More Diverse Skilled Workforce in the Highway Trades: Are Oregon’s Current Efforts Working?](#)

⁹⁵ Pfefferle, Susan G., and Tyronda S. Gibson. [Minority Recruitment for the 21st Century: An Environmental Scan.](#) Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. 2010.

⁹⁶ Ibid. [Minority Recruitment for the 21st Century: An Environmental Scan.](#)

⁹⁷ Ibid. [Recasting American Apprenticeship: A Summary of The Barriers to Apprenticeship Expansion Research Project.](#)

The Aspen Institute's report, *Recasting American Apprenticeship: A Summary of the Barriers to Apprenticeship Expansion* offers the following suggestions to combat hazing and harassment in the workplace:

1. Provision of technical assistance to employers to develop methods to recruit and to develop and implement effective policies. Include increasing majority workers comfort with and ability to work with underrepresented populations, which would contribute to decreasing over and subtle discrimination at worksites.
2. Increase monitoring of sponsors and employers could improve working conditions without the impacted individual having to directly file a complaint.
3. Connect participants with effective mentors and peer support. Teaching effective mentorship techniques to all workers.
4. Peer sharing even across job sites. Consider peer-to-peer support group meetings when an on-the-job mentor cannot be provided; monthly social hours; giving advice on how to effectively communicate with supervisors.⁹⁸

Mentorship, Flexible Training and Other Supports

Mentorship is critical to any occupation as it provides mentees an opportunity to gain knowledge, insight and opportunities for professional socialization and personal support to increase one's chance of success in the workplace. These added supports are especially important for underrepresented employees in the industry to ensure effective job performance and promote the sharpening of soft skills. Apprenticeship programs should build networking and mentoring opportunities into its curriculum to provide extra support in the development of apprentices⁹⁹. Because cancellation is most likely to occur during the first year of an apprenticeship, mentorship programs should be in place at the start of an apprenticeship¹⁰⁰.

Pre-apprenticeship opportunities are also important as they can help prepare underserved individuals meet apprenticeship program requirements to successfully transition into an apprenticeship program¹⁰¹. Non-profit organizations, community colleges and industry professionals should together examine existing pre-apprenticeship models that have successfully helped raise skill levels, have connected underserved populations to jobs, have served participants in a cost-effective manner and have met employers' needs¹⁰². Community colleges and non-profits are particularly well-suited to advance this

⁹⁸ Ibid. [Recasting American Apprenticeship: A Summary of The Barriers to Apprenticeship Expansion Research Project.](#)

⁹⁹ Ibid. [Apprenticeship Completion and Cancellation in the Building Trades.](#)

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. [Apprenticeship Completion and Cancellation in the Building Trades.](#)

¹⁰¹ Ibid. [Apprenticeship Completion and Cancellation in the Building Trades.](#)

¹⁰² Ibid. [Apprenticeship Completion and Cancellation in the Building Trades.](#)

agenda as they are often the facilitators of remedial courses and preparatory programs in local communities.

Industry professionals and government entities should also consider supporting apprentices with paid classroom training, as financial hurdles often deter program enrollment by low-income, low-skilled adults¹⁰³. Paid classroom training can help with addressing child care and transportation needs that often pose a challenge for women and racial/ethnic minorities. It is also important to ensure that apprentices are eligible for state-funded financial aid, and that WIOA opportunities to support education and training are understood and communicated to apprentices¹⁰⁴.

Investment in Diverse Communities

Apprenticeship programs and companies that take the time to invest in and build relationships with racial/ethnic minority communities are more likely to prepare the workforce pipeline beginning far before an individual enters into an apprenticeship¹⁰⁵. Regardless of the field, relationship building is key, and there are many ways that apprenticeship programs, trade organizations and companies can invest in the community. For example, organizations can host community open houses or offer free space for community group meetings¹⁰⁶. Organizations should also consider diversifying its board of directors and engaging community members in recruitment activities. Advertising on local radio stations whose target audiences are racial/ethnic minorities and engaging with national minority-serving organizations is equally critical¹⁰⁷.

Successful equity and inclusion strategies must be sustained and continually improved upon. The barriers to entry of an apprenticeship are varied, however, organizations can improve the recruitment and retention of Hispanics and other diverse populations through targeted outreach to these communities. Building partnerships with local schools and minority-serving organizations is key to priming the workforce pipeline at all stages. Investment in K-12 programs that expose students to careers in skilled trades and offer mentorship and pathways programs will help employers recruit a more diverse pool of candidates and fill gaps in employment¹⁰⁸.

¹⁰³ Ibid. [Recasting American Apprenticeship: A Summary of The Barriers to Apprenticeship Expansion Research Project.](#)

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. [Recasting American Apprenticeship: A Summary of The Barriers to Apprenticeship Expansion Research Project.](#)

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. [Minority Recruitment for the 21st Century: An Environmental Scan.](#)

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. [Minority Recruitment for the 21st Century: An Environmental Scan.](#)

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. [Minority Recruitment for the 21st Century: An Environmental Scan.](#)

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. [Minority Recruitment for the 21st Century: An Environmental Scan.](#)

Project PIPELine (Pathway to Industry Preparation and Education) –

A Latino Affairs Commission Pilot Initiative

The recruitment of diverse professionals who are sufficiently trained to fill the shortage gaps is critical to the sustainability of the professions and our economy. Racial/ethnic minorities and women are vastly underrepresented in skilled trades and trade unions, and targeted recruitment is essential to improving the diversity of the skilled trade workforce. The Ohio Latino Affairs Commission has developed a pilot program that seeks to promote skilled trades occupations beginning in middle school, to address the long-term need to recruit diverse candidates to the professions.

The pilot initiative is titled *Project PIPELine (Pathway to Industry Preparation and Education)* and has a mission to recruit and support diverse youth in pursuit of a career in skilled trades through mentorship and experiential education. Objectives of Project PIPELine are to: (1) improve educational outcomes for diverse youth; (2) expose diverse youth to professional trade occupations; (3) enrich the soft skills and leadership skills of diverse youth; (4) create a support system for diverse youth through mentorship; (5) increase workforce retention by preparing diverse youth for employment; and (6) help diverse youth build connections to future employment.

Instituting a pilot program will enable the Commission and its partners to modify programming based on the needs of participants to capitalize on time and resources. Whitehall City Schools, located in Franklin County, has been chosen as the pilot site for Project PIPELine in-part because of its commitment to exposing students to skilled trades and other workforce opportunities that do not require a 4-year degree. Because the mission of the pilot project is to increase the diversity in skilled trades, the racial/ethnic breakdown of Whitehall, English Learner (EL) population and socioeconomically disadvantaged population all make the school district an optimal place to recruit a diverse student pool.

The pilot project will commence during the Fall of 2018 at Rosemore Middle School, where racial/ethnic minorities comprise nearly 70 percent of the school's population¹⁰⁹. Approximately 39 percent of students at Rosemore Middle School are African American, 31 percent are Caucasian, 21 percent are Hispanic/Latino, 8 percent are bi-racial or multi-racial and 2 percent are Asian¹¹⁰. Nearly 13 percent of the student population is categorized as English learners, which is almost five times higher than the state average¹¹¹.

Over 77 percent of students at Rosemore Middle School can be categorized as socioeconomically disadvantaged with the vast majority receiving free or reduced lunch¹¹². To qualify for free lunch a child's family income must be below 130 percent FPL, and to qualify for reduced lunch a child's family income must be below 185 percent FPL.

¹⁰⁹ [Rosemore Middle School Report Card](#), Ohio Department of Education, 2017.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. [Rosemore Middle School Report Card](#).

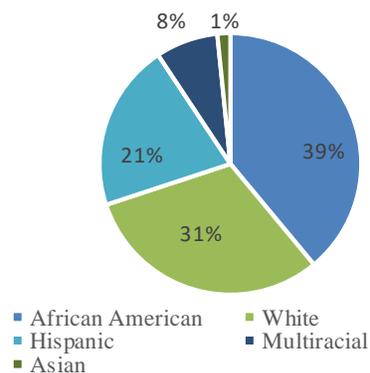
¹¹¹ Ibid. [Rosemore Middle School Report Card](#)

¹¹² Ibid. [Rosemore Middle School Report Card](#)

Project PIPEline Programming

Beginning in the Fall of 2018, the Ohio Latino Affairs Commission will partner with Rosemore Middle School, Ohio Department of Education, Eastland-Fairfield Career & Technical Schools (EFCTS), and various trade organizations to host a skilled trade “career day” at the middle schools where students are exposed to various trade professions. Students who have indicated interest in skilled trades professions will be invited with their families to attend an orientation that discusses Project PIPEline. Students will be required to apply to become a cohort participant and admitted students will attend a trades camp sponsored by EFCTS the following summer. There will be no charge for students to attend the camp, and transportation will be offered free of charge to all students by Whitehall City Schools.

**Racial/Ethnic
Composition -
Rosemore Middle
School**



Source: [Ohio Department of Education](#)

During their 8th grade year, students in the cohort will engage in an after-school program that focuses on career exploration and participating in hands-on projects that are aligned with the skilled trades. In 9th grade, students will be matched with a mentor in the skilled trades profession who will check-in with them on a quarterly basis. From 9th grade until graduation, students will be required to attend quarterly academic and professional development workshops that further expose them to trades while also honing their soft skills, such as recognizing the importance of a strong work ethic, punctuality, remaining drug-free, etc. Students will work towards obtaining the OhioMeansJobs-Readiness Seal on their diplomas and transcripts, signifying they have the personal strengths to contribute to the workplace and their communities. The OhioMeansJobs-Readiness Seal was developed in 2017 by the Governor’s Office of Workforce Transformation, the Ohio Department of Education and the Ohio Department of Higher Education to help close the skills gap and recognize high school graduates who have demonstrated career readiness¹¹³.

Students in the cohort will have guaranteed entrance to the EFCTS beginning in 11th grade, provided they have met attendance and grade requirements. Formal mentoring will end after students graduate from high school, however mentors and mentees will be encouraged to remain in contact. It is anticipated that most students will transfer to an apprenticeship program following graduation. The first cohort of students will graduate in 2024, marking the span of the program 6 years to completion per cohort (7th – 12th grade).

¹¹³ [Success Bound](#). Ohio Department of Education. August 2018.

Project PIPELine has a goal to recruit cohorts annually beginning in 2018, with the expected number of participants to be between 10-30 students per cohort per year. With an estimated 30 students per cohort per year, by 2024 there will be six cohorts (180 students) running concurrently for a yearly budget of \$192,140 with a full-time project manager.

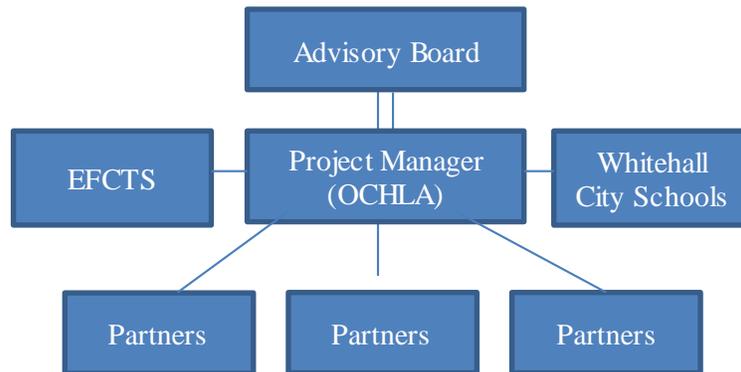
Budget for Annual Cohort of 30 Students

FY Year	Part-time PM	Full-time PM
2019	\$7,950	\$7,950
2020	\$21,120	\$21,120
2021	\$53,690	\$101,690
2022	\$82,610	\$130,610
2023	\$112,070	\$160,070
2024*	\$144,140	\$192,140
2025*	\$144,140	\$192,140

Source: Ohio Latino Affairs Commission

Project PIPELine will be managed by the Ohio Latino Affairs Commission (project developer) beginning Fall of 2018 to Fall of 2021, with a goal to transition to a non-profit model beginning in 2022. The Commission will create an advisory board to ensure accountability, monitor performance measures, and adapt programming needs as necessary. Subject matter experts on the advisory board will help fill gaps in knowledge by providing expertise and guidance relating to the project’s development. The Advisory Board will meet quarterly with the Project Manager to receive status updates, financial reporting, adapt programming needs, etc.

Fall 2018-Fall 2021



Source: Ohio Latino Affairs Commission

While Project PIPELine is not a panacea to meet the skilled trades workforce shortage, it will help address the long-term need to create a pipeline to skilled trades professions that begins at an early age. By investing less than \$5,000 per child, partners are helping students prepare to enter a skilled trade in which they would earn on average \$70,251¹¹⁴ – or \$25,000 more than the average Ohioan in annual compensation¹¹⁵. The 180 students who will comprise the first 6 cohorts to complete the program will collectively earn an estimated \$146,122,080 annually upon their completion of an accredited apprenticeship program.

Most importantly, this initiative will help students secure careers that lead to self-sustainability thereby ending cycles of poverty. Engaging historically disenfranchised communities that are vastly

¹¹⁴ [Ohio Manufacturing Resource Guide](#). Office of the Ohio Treasurer. 2015.

¹¹⁵ [Occupational Employment Statistics](#). Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2017.

underrepresented in skilled trades through targeted recruitment goes far beyond showcasing an exhibitor booth at a career fair. Project PIPEline graduates will be important ambassadors and recruiters to the skilled trades profession. Ultimately, they will carry on the legacy of the trades.

VI. Conclusion

As the number of vacant trade positions continues to increase, so does the importance of implementing targeted recruitment practices to form a diverse and capable workforce. Employers, educators, parents and community and state leaders alike must work together to create a pathway to careers in the skilled trades sector for Hispanic workers.

Educators can begin by providing student support and forming community partnerships. By advertising apprenticeship programs as an estimable form of postsecondary education rather than a back-up for students deemed unable to succeed in a 4-year degree program, teachers and administrators can help address the negative and erroneous stigma that prevents many students from pursuing such careers. Similarly, they should ensure that students are exposed to the professional trades as early as elementary or middle school by hosting a trade fair or visiting a local career technical center.

Trade organizations and unions can recruit Latino workers by partnering with schools and community organizations that have earned the trust of the targeted population. They should advertise their programs and positions through culturally-competent avenues such as at community events or through Latino media outlets. Finally, organizations should ensure that their work sites are welcoming to diverse workers by providing assistance with language needs, remaining cognizant of cultural differences and assigning supportive mentors to new workers.

Lastly, federal and state agencies can support the diversification of the trades industry by facilitating partnerships between hiring bodies and organizations that work with diverse job-seekers. They must also review and enforce affirmative action requirements for apprenticeship programs and increase support for those programs that consistently meet female and minority enrollment goals. Lastly, they should support educational institutions and other entities that seek to create pathways to the skilled trades industry for diverse students.

The Ohio Latino Affairs Commission works to break down barriers to entry in the professional trades for Latinos through our Project PIPELine initiative and strategic partnerships with organizations like the Ohio Department of Education and the Ohio Hispanic Chambers of Commerce. We are ready to assist the State of Ohio in improving educational and professional outcomes for Latinos and are committed to equipping state leaders with key information on Ohio's Hispanic communities. Latino Community Reports are part of the Commission's work to fulfill its statutory mandate to advise Ohio's government on issues affecting their Hispanic constituents.

Ohio Latino Affairs Commission

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